



MAMLECHET HACHAI: VIGILANCE

THE TORAH TEACHES THAT WE SHOULD BE “VIGILANT” ABOUT THE WELL-BEING OF A LOST ANIMAL.

- Does anyone know what the word “vigilant” means? (Watchful.)
- The Torah says: “You shall not see your neighbor’s ox or his sheep”—or any of his animals—“go astray and hide yourself from them; you shall surely bring them back to your neighbor.” (Dt. 22:1, Ex. 23:4-5)
- Did you ever “hide yourself” from anything you were supposed to do?
- What do you think it means to “hide yourself” from seeing that an animal has gone astray?

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN AN ANIMAL THAT WAS LOST?

- How did you, or would you, know that it was lost?
- Suppose you saw a goat in the middle of a field: how would you know that it was *not* lost? (The field was fenced.)
- Suppose you saw a dog without a leash in a business section of the city: how would you know that it was *not* lost? (It was sitting obediently at the entrance to a store.)

SUPPOSE YOU FIND AN ANIMAL THAT IS LOST: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

- Make sure that the animal is not dangerous (like a rabid dog).
- Look to see if the animal is injured or sick.
- Offer water to the animal if you think it may be thirsty (because it’s drinking out of the gutter).
- Try to find the owner or call the humane society or the police.

WHAT DO YOU THINK WE CAN LEARN FROM THE TORAH’S TEACHINGS ABOUT TAKING CARE OF LOST ANIMALS?

- What does it mean if we say that the Torah is teaching us to take care of other living creatures? (Maybe that if we do that or fail to do that it will make a big difference in our lives—for better or worse.)
- If it’s true that we should be vigilant or watchful for lost animals, what about people who are lost?

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS IN WHICH PEOPLE BECOME LOST?

- Sometimes young children can't find their way home.
- Sometimes people become "lost" in the sense that they can't figure out how to do something very practical, like change a flat tire on a car or fix a broken pipe.
- Sometimes people become "lost" in the sense that they become afraid that they'll fail at something they have to do, like school work or a job, so they run away from their responsibility and get into trouble.
- Sometimes people become "lost" because they do something wrong, like tell a lie, and then are afraid to admit the truth, so they tell more lies to cover up the first lie.
- Have you or anyone you've known ever been lost in any of these ways and, if so, what did you or could you do to help the person?



Gather the People

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